

# ALLE-KISKI INTERGOVERNMENTAL COUNCIL

Tom Guzzo  
Chair

Mike Kornis  
Vice-Chair

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Secretary

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City of Lower Burrell  
Vandergrift Borough

City of Arnold  
City of New Kensington

East Vandergrift Borough  
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West Leechburg Borough

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## ***Alle-Kiski Intergovernmental Council Partners with Westmoreland County on an Ambitious Revitalization Initiative Aimed at Addressing Blight within the Region***

*The project will provide six participating communities with critical information through a property conditions assessment and blight mitigation plan to help address blighted properties*

### **For Immediate Release**

**New Kensington, PA** – The Alle-Kiski Intergovernmental Council is proud to announce that the six communities of Allegheny Township, Arnold, East Vandergrift, New Kensington, Vandergrift, and West Leechburg will be partnering with Westmoreland County, through its Department of Planning and Development, with support from the Redevelopment Authority of Westmoreland County and the Local Government Academy, to conduct a regional property conditions assessment and blight mitigation plan.

The project comes out of the work of the Alle-Kiski Intergovernmental Council, a voluntary organization comprised of eight member governments located in the northern part of Westmoreland County. The Council serves as a forum for the identification of intergovernmental issues and projects and stems from the Planning District concept outlined in the County's comprehensive plan, *Reimagining Our Westmoreland*. The Council is preparing to enter into its third year of operation and is pleased about the shared project.

"Embracing this initiative means taking control of our region's image and steering our own narrative," said Tom Guzzo, Chairman of the Alle-Kiski Intergovernmental Council and Mayor of the City of New Kensington. "Blight impacts our neighborhoods, businesses, and economic prosperity. This is an incredible opportunity to drive positive change in our communities that wouldn't have been possible without the collaborative mission of the Alle-Kiski Intergovernmental Council."

Since its inception in 2021, members of the Alle-Kiski Intergovernmental Council have been busy building mutual trust and exploring ways to work together by discussing opportunities to share services, jointly purchase items, and tackle common challenges faced by local governments. The announcement of the project is a testament to the Council's dedication to working together and the value of strong intergovernmental relationships in Westmoreland County.

"Westmoreland County has 65 distinct municipalities, to tackle common challenges, it is crucial to establish partnerships both within and between our Planning Districts," said Sean Kertes, Chairman of the Westmoreland County Board of Commissioners. "By working together strategically and partnering together, communities can achieve great things. On behalf of my fellow board members, I would like to extend my congratulations to these communities for adopting a regional approach to address blight," said Kertes.

Over the first phase of the project, County planners will work with local government officials to collect communitywide property information and create an innovative online-based mapping

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tool. The tool will display comprehensive property information, alongside additional available datasets such as tax delinquency, crime incidents, and code violations, which will empower local leaders with data-driven insights.

"The goal of this project isn't just about identifying the problem; it's about providing a dynamic solution," emphasized Mike Korn, Vice-Chairman of the Alle-Kiski Intergovernmental Council and Allegheny Township Supervisor. "By pinpointing blight hotspots and critical properties alongside other data through this project, we hope to better allocate resources more efficiently and implement targeted measures," said Korn.

During the second phase of the project, County planners will work with a blight taskforce, composed of key stakeholders from each participating community, to create a blight plan informed by the initial property conditions assessment. The plan, built upon the Pennsylvania Housing Alliance's *Five-Step Fast Track Blight Plan* process, will map out strategies and tactics for each community to address blight.

The collaborative project is bolstered by support from the Redevelopment Authority of Westmoreland County and the Local Government Academy, which have contributed \$21,500 and \$20,000 respectively, underscoring the shared commitment to combat blight and initiate change.

"Local Government Academy is proud to have the opportunity to work on this important initiative and highlight the value of regional cooperation in combating persistent issues such as blight," said Joy M. Ruff, AICP, Executive Director of Local Government Academy. As part of its contribution to the project, the Local Government Academy, a non-partisan, independent non-profit organization, will provide technical assistance to incorporate a market-based analysis and recommendations for key properties, which will be incorporated into the blight plan.

"Addressing blight requires collective action and a well-orchestrated strategy," said Brian Lawrence, Executive Director of the Redevelopment Authority of Westmoreland County. "Through collaboration, we can lay the groundwork needed to revitalize and create healthy and whole communities in Westmoreland County. We are excited to support this unique project," said Lawrence.

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## About the Alle-Kiski Intergovernmental Council

The Alle-Kiski Intergovernmental Council is a voluntary organization of eight member governments which meet for the purpose of discussing, planning, and undertaking joint, intergovernmental activities. Created in 2021, the Council consists of Allegheny Township, Arnold, East Vandergrift, Lower Burrell, New Kensington, Upper Burrell Township, Vandergrift, and West Leechburg. Learn more about the Council online here:

<https://www.reimaginingourwestmoreland.org/alle-kiski-intergovernmental-council.html>

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